

# The Athenian Mercury.

Quest. 1. **W**Hether it be lawful to do evil that good may come on't?

Ans. Not, if St. Paul be in the right, who tells us, those who do so, their damnation is just: But the fear is lest People shou'd mistake, as some do now as well as formerly, call evil good, and good evil.

Qu. 2. If the Soul be immediately infused, How did Levi pay Tithes in Abraham? And does not that Text imply that Levi was produced out of Abraham both Soul and Body?

Ans. Those words of Levi's paying Tithes in Abraham, are not to be taken in a strict literal sense, but more lax and accommodate, as appears by the softening expression the Apostle uses just before *ὡς ἔπος εἰρησίου*, well enough render'd in our own Translation [as I may so say] Levi, that is, his Body was originally, or potentially in Abraham; tho' the sense wou'd be yet more mollified if, we shou'd, as we may well enough, interpret *ἡ*, which we translate [In] by [Per,] by or thorough Abraham. It's further plain, that tis in this figurative sense only the Apostle speaks, from the next expression -- Levi who receiveth Tithes, that is, his Successors and Family, call'd after his name, than actually did it.

Quest. 3. All men sinning in Adam, How cou'd that be, unless all were in him?

Ans. This Question's of the same nature with the other, sent, if I am not mistaken, by the same person, and admits much the same Answer. If he means their Souls, they must be, if at all, in Adam, either actually or potentially. If actually, he must be a Monster indeed to have so many Souls to one Body; nor can it be supposed their actions could be uniform. If potentially, I'd fain know what the Potentiality of a Soul is, and how 'tis educed out of that power; or how tis possible to find Generation in Spirits, the Accident of Bodies only, which can never be without Corruption, which a Spirit admits not of. But if they say, the Soul is only matter, we must refer 'em to that description thereof formerly given. -- Well, but how then did all Men sin in Adam --? They sinn'd in him as he was their Parent, Representative and Head; and accordingly they dye as proceeding from a dying Parent, every like producing its like. Nor was he only their Parent, but constituted their Head and Representative by his Maker, as our Saviour was of restored mankind -- So the Apostle, As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.

Quest. 4. What was the Question on which Christ disputed in the Temple?

Ans. Probable Guesses must suffice (and I hope are not unlawful) where neither Reason nor Revelation help us. We are then to remark, that he Heard, as well as

Ask'd, -- Both bearing them and asking them Questions. John -- And that 'twas more Questions than one, the old way of Disputation (even in Greece it self, before Aristotle reduced it to Mode and Figure) being by short Questions and Interrogations. For the substance thereof, we may lawfully and probably enough guess it to be concerning the Impletion of the Prophecies of the Messiah, in their Books, the Law, Prophets, Psalms, &c. The Weeks of Daniel, or other things of that nature.

Quest. 5. What was it which our Saviour wrote on the Ground; and who that Woman was who was taken in Adultery? Whether it might not be Mary Magdalen?

Ans. This Question is much of the same Nature with the former, and can only be guessed at. It seems not probable this person was not Mary Magdalen, because this Woman was taken in Adultery; but Mary Magdalen, was not, that we read of, ever marry'd, and has the Character of Meretrix, not Adultera; taking her very Cognomen, as some learned Men think, from a Hebrew word, which signifies such a Plaiting or Folding of the Hair as was then usual among common Women. Besides, if it had been Mary Magdalen, here we had been most likely to have had the remarkable story of Christ casting out seven Devils from her, whereof in this place not a word. For his writing on the ground, some think 'twas only to divert their Question; seeming as if he did not hear them. If he wrote any thing determinately, I see no incongruity in supposing it might be the same he afterwards spoke, He that is without Sin of You, let him first cast a Stone at her.

Quest. 6. Why those words, These three are one, 1 Epist. of St John, 5. 7. are generally left out in the Old MSS. or when found, only marginally inserted?

Ans. The Question might have been as well of all the Verse, which we find omitted by several of the antient MSS. though inserted in as many. Tis found in 9 out of 16, which H. Stephens made use of, and in all the Greek Copies in St. Jerome's Time, as he himself witnesses. It agrees excellently well both with the preceding and consequent words, and is for two persons the same in sense with what our Saviour himself inserted, I and my Father are one. They are not then generally, tho' often left out, and how that may be we may easily conceive, since it must be added or taken away by the mistake of the Copier, the Fraud of the Arians, or the Pious Fraud of the Christians. Tis very unlikely it would be added by the first way, since Transcribers seldom or never make such Mistakes; though omitted it might me, the words of the ensuing V. beginning as this does, whence they might



might easily slip it over. The *Orthodox* had no need of adding it, since they had other Testimonies enough without it; nor did they, since we find it quoted before the *Arian* Controversy, or *Arius* himself was born; particularly by St. Cyprian about the middle of the third Century, who quotes those very words, *lib. De Unitate Ecclesiae*. And these three are one. So *Tertullian*, St. *Athanasius* and others, of which see the Great Dr. *Hammond*. It only remains then that they were Taken away by the *Arians*, which they both might do, having so many Emperors, some Councils, nay at one time, all the World of their side; and 'twould concern 'em to do it, since so plain a place for the Trinity: And lastly, we have from History an express account that they or some other *Hereticks* did actually corrupt some places in the first Epistle of St. *John*, particularly some Text relating to the Deity of Christ, which none so positively assert as this. See *Socrates* his *Eccles. History* and *Tripart.*

Quest. 7. How we may know the Scriptures to be the word of God?

Ans. We have moral Demonstration, or Human Infallibility, and more too, that they are so. And that from these Topics; First from Divine Testimony, in those legible Signatures and Impresses of Divinity instampt upon 'em. Some Directions for mankind are necessary, and that, such as shall remain a standing Rule: None can compare with this for Antiquity, Utility, Gravity, Majesty. Nor is that strange effect these Writings have on the minds of Men in the perusing 'em, both Heathens and Christians, an Argument to be slighted. As for *Human Testimony*, we have that which is to us Infallible, namely the concurrent Tradition of all Places and Ages, which have delivered down these Books to us as the Works of inspired Men; And I defy all the Enemies and Blasphemers of those Sacred Books, to produce me one Instance of matter of Fact, attested in this manner, that is not true. If there have been some Men who have either deny'd or lessen'd the Authority of these Books, or added others to 'em which they'd pretend of equal Authority, even this is a strong Argument of the Truth of those Sacred Writings, since such Accidents as these are clearly prophesied of, and provided against therein. But we have, besides all this, the Progress of the Gospel, and the Flames of the Martyrs, to witness the same undeniable Truth: For how should the Doctrins contain'd in these Books make such a Progress through the World, without Force, nay in spite of it, and in contradiction to all the proud affected Learning of *Greece* and *Rome*; and why should the wisest, and best, and bravest of Men, many thousands of millions of 'em, endure the severest Torments for what was contained therein, had there not been something extraordinary, and confessing a Divine Power which first

dictated it; which has still preserved it, and which will do so to the end of the World, in spite of all the Blasphemies of Papists, Atheists, Turks, Jews and Heathens.

Quest. 8. When we differ about the sense of the words; by whom must we be tryed, since our Letter can't explain it self?

Ans. We deny that the Letter, can't explain it self; for nothing can be deliver'd, *viva voce*, but what may also be committed to Letters; nor is there any thing necessary to be believed, as a Fundamental Article of our Creed, but what is there clearly enough express'd That there are so many Interpretations of these words, and so much difference concerning their sense, is no Argument they are not clear in themselves; Since if Men are perverse, they may *nodum in scirpo invenire*, find or make a difficulty where they please. After all, great heed is to be given to the Sentiments of the *Primitive Church*; and could I know what the Universal Church, that is, the Majority in all places and ages have taught, I think it ought very near to conclude my Judgment. But since that cannot easily be decided, there's no Remedy, but every particular Church must judg for it self, and every particular Member of that Church have his own Judgment of Discretion, which all the World practise themselves, though they deny it others; and to bind that up would perfectly Unman Humanity.

Quest. 9. What was the Language spoke before the confusion of Babel?

Ans. History informs us that *Heber* and his Family amongst all the rest joynd not with *Nimrod* in building the Tower of *Babel*: So that the Old Language remain'd unchanged in his Family, and from him borrow'd the Name of *Hebrew*, which Language was at that time spoken throughout the World.

Quest. 10. A Friend of mine is like to have a Child Fathered on him; the Mother Confesses he never lay with her but once, and then she was a Maid, Query, Whether tis possible to lose a Maidenhead and conceive a Child at the same time?

Ans. Naturalists tell us (and bring some Instances) That great falls and Extreme Coughs are sometimes so violent as to break the Hymen and spoil the Virgin Tokens; but such Accidents are so rare, that I should be very loath to trust Virginitie with that Excuse. 'Tis true, that an Impregnation is Common in Brutes or Animals, upon a single Act of Coition; But we never meet with a parallel Instance amongst Women. I have known a night to produce an Effective Action, but it was amongst several Tryals: A Maid the first time undergoes too much of the rack and Torture to be capable of acting her part Effectually; and a Young Mans Eagerness pushes him on to do what is natural for him to do before the Critical time—There's no Physician that will be so uncharitable as not to allow a possibility of an Act of this Nature; but yet none's so great a Fool as not to place it amongst those things that are next to Impossibilities, especially in an Age which produces a Sex more delicate and tender than ordinarily—If her decisive Oath is taken in this, 'twill be the wonder of every Ear, and the Magistrate that acts pursuant to this Oath, will be believed rather to act according to the strictness of his Office, than the Justice of Nature. We may shortly be perswaded out of our Senses when the plain order of Nature is thus Legerdmain'd in Curtains, and every body abus'd with this Mysterious sleight of Conveyance, —The next Age after a few more such Presidents, may put in for a Charter, and set up a Society of Maiden Juglers. I would almost as soon believe the relation of *Averroes*, concerning the Woman that conceived in a Bath by attracting the Seminal Effluxion of a Man admitted to Bath near her.

Quest. 11. What is Time?

Ans. A Continued flux or Chain of Novels.

Quest. 12. What is the best remedy against Fear?

Ans. The result of vertuous actions; for those that do no ill, fear none.

Quest. 13. What sort of People are those that most often meet with infamous Deaths?

Ans. 14. Those that foolishly squander away their Estates, and as shamefully repair 'em.

F I N I S.

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